Project I.D. No. 90

NAME: Yamazaki, Kazuko DATE OF BIRTH: 1898 PLACE OF BIRTH: Wakayama
Age: 76 Sex: F Marital Status: W Education: 8 yrs.

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1920 Age: 22 M.S. M Port of entry: Seattle
Occupation/s: 1. Cook's wife 2. Restaurant help 3. Laundry worker
Place of residence: 1. Sacramento 2. ↓ 3. ↓
Religious affiliation: Christian church 4. Manager of a hotel
Community organizations/activities:

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Wallaga
Name of relocation center: Tule Lake, Jerome, Rowher
Dispensation of property: Sold the hotel Names of bank/s:
Jobs held in camp: 1. Kitchen helper 2.
Jobs held outside of camp:
Left camp to go to:

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: Aug. 1945
Address/es: 1. Sacramento 2.
3.
Religious affiliation: Christian church
Activities: 1. 2. 3.
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: Husband died in 1934

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 10/4/74 Place: Sacramento
Translator:
unlisted

T: Please tell me your name first.

Y: My name is Kazuko Yamasaki.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Wakayama Prefecture.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in 1898. I am 76 years old .

Q: What was your father's occupation?

A: He was a farmer.

Q: Did he own land?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: Was he a strict man or a gentle person?

A: He was not too strict. In Japan men have not much to do with children's education, so he let my mother bring up the children.

Q: What kind of a person was your mother?

A: She was a very gentle person. As I was the youngest child she loved me very much.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: There were 6 brothers and sisters.

Q: Was your family religion Buddhism?

A: Yes, it was. It was Nishi Honganji.

Q: Have you heard about Sontoku Ninomiya?

A: Yes, I learned about him in a reader at the elementary school.

Q: How much education did you have?

A: I had 8 years of education; 6 years in elementary school and 2 years in junior high school.

Q: Do you remember about your schooldays?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: What kind of thing do you remember?

A: I have many recollections but nothing special.

Q: What kind of fun did you have?

A: I enjoyed the trips in Spring and Fall from school most. We took trips to other towns in Wakayama. We did not have overnight trips in those days.

Q: Were your teachers strict?

A: I had a gentle woman teacher till the 4th grade. After 4th grade the principal taught classes. There were only 3 or 4 teachers in the school. After I graduated from school I went to learn sewing.

Q: What kind of subjects were there?

A: There were moral science, math, reading, writing, history and geography. but moral science was the most important subject in those days.

Q: Did you have many friends?

A: I had some friends in my class. My closes friend and I did not visit each other much as I came to America. early. Her friend was a government official. As my father was a farmer I had to help farming after I graduated from the school. My oldest brother inherited my father's work and farmed. Two younger brothers attended schools, one in Tokyo and the other in Kyoto. My two older sisters were married, I helped my brother farm until I came to America.

Q: Were there festivals in the village?

A: Yes, there were.

Q: What kind of festivals were there?

A: There were Spring festival and summer festival, but autumn festival which was held on October 15 was most crowded with people. Some people even came from towns.

Q: Was it held at the shrine?

A: Yes, it was held in the grounds of the shrine. There were horserace, carnival and many stores were out.

Q: What kind of games did you play?

A: When we were little we bounced balls and played dolls in the grounds of the shrine. After I graduated from school I went to learn sewing.

Q: Was there any incident in your village?

A: I remember the victory parade with lantern when Japanese won the Russo-Japanese War. I was about 7 years old them.

Q: Did your father serve as an officer of any organization?

A: He worked as a head officer of a temple. My mother was a daughter of a Buddhist monk. One of my brothers became a monk, but he is retired now.

Q: How did it come about that you came to America?

A: After my uncle (mother's brother) who was an heir to the temple lost his only son he became delinquent and gambled and lost all the property that belonged to the temple. My father gave my brother who was 15 or 16 then to my uncle as an adopted son hoping that he might get back on the right path. As my father had to bear expenses of the temple such as sending my brother to the Buddhist University, he once said, "I wish one of my children would go to America." When I heard that, I decided I would go to America to help my father. I came to America with such an idea but things did not go as I expected, and I could not help my father.

Q: Did your uncle spent all the temple's fortune by gambling?

A: Yes, he did. He could not stay in his village, so he moved to Shiga Prefecture. I visited him there once.

Q: Did you come to America to be married to Mr. Yamasaki?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What was your maiden name?

A: It was Harada.

Q: Did you know Mr. Yamasaki?

A: He was my father's cousin's son.

Q: Was there a go-between?

A: Yes, a relative acted as a go-between.

Q: Was Mr. Yamasaki back in Japan?

A: Yes, he came back to visit his mother. He came to America summond by his uncle when he was about 16 years old. Since then he had been single. When he went back to Japan to visit his mother, she told him that she would not let him go back to America unless he was married. I think he stayed in Japan for about a year. He might have wanted to stay single, but as his mother encouraged him to get married I think he decided to do so.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was only 19½ years old then.

Q: How old was he?

A: He was 36 years old.

Q: Then you got married, didn't you?

A: Yes, we did. We came to America and the following year our oldest daughter was born.

Q: Where did you go first?

A: We landed at Seattle and came to Sacramento where my husband lived. Since then we have been living in Sacramento only.

Q: What year was that?

A: It was 1920.

Q: Many Issei women married older men then, didn't they?

A: Yes, average age difference was around 15 and there were many who married men more than 20 years older.

Q: Did you get along well?

A: No, we did not understand each other too well. Even among women we have different interest if we are more than 10 years apart.

Q: It was difficult, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was. Sometimes I was distressed but I did not have an opportunity to go back to Japan as we were poor.

Q: What kind of difficulties did you experience?

A: My husband is an honest and quiet man, but when he drank he was different so I was distressed many a times. I don't blame him. He came to this country when he was young and lived among strangers. It would have been good if he had a good friend who guided him to a right path, but in those days Isseis who are nearly 90 years old now drank or gambled. They worked hard during the summer and came back to the boarding house during the winter when they did not have work. As they had time they drank or played cards. There was no other amusements in those days so I don't blame them. I was a farmer's daughter so I was used to hard work, but my husband told me that a woman who had never done hard work married a man about 20 years older who had a restaurant in Stockton. She used to put the baby to sleep on the other side of the lunch counter and worked as a waitress. My husband said he felt sorry for her. When a child was born she had to do any kind of work.

My husband was a cook. I heard that he owned a restaurant when he was young but when I came here he was working for other people. Within a week after I came here I started working as a kitchen helper peeling potatoe and washing dishes. My husband worked as a cook at another restaurant. After the baby was born I stayed home so my husband had to work alone to support the family. He worked Sundays and holidays as his wage was not like today.

Q: When you first came here you didn't know anything, didn't you. What kind of difficulties did people have?

A: Some women had to follow their husbands during the harvesting time carrying blankets on their backs. When children were born they could not work so they rent small rooms in town and lived there. I did not have such experience, but I worked till the baby was born, and after the baby was born I stayed home. After my first baby I did not have another baby for 8 years although I had a misscarriage during that period. When my daughter started going to kéndergaten I worked as a cashier for about 3 hours a day while she was in the kindergarten. In the meantime we owned a restaurant and kept it for about 5 years. It was during the Depression. My son was born in 1929 and 2 or 3 years since then the Depression continued and there was no hope, so we sold the restaurant. Soon after that my husband became ill and after 2 years of suffering he died.

Q: When you first came from Seattle to Sacramento and started working at a restaurant was it in the city?

Q: Yes, it was in downtown Sacrament. My husband's friend who had a restaurant on G Street needed a helper, so after learning how to wash dishes ~~by~~ from my husband I started working as a kitchen helper.

Q: If you can do it over, would you like to come here or not?

A: If I were young I may not want to come here. As my children were growing up, and as they are American citizens I thought they would have a hard time if we go to Japan. I thought if we stay in this country we would manage to make a living, so we stayed here without going back to Japan.

Q: How many years since your husband passed away?

A: It has been 40 years.

Q: Did you own a restaurant then?

A: No. After we sold the restaurant I worked part-time cutting lettuce and celery. My husband worked at a white restaurant for a while.

Q: Was he in restaurant business all the time?

A: Yes, he was as he could cook. He worked at Capitol Tamale House on 10th Street between K & L Streets before the war. Before he became ill he helped a friend who worked at a restaurant. It was cold and I think he was getting weak. His legs were swollen so we thought he had kidney trouble. When a doctor examined him we were told that he had bad heart, and then his lung was bad, so he was hospitalized.

Q: How long was he in the hospital?

A: After he was in the County Hospital for half a year his condition improved so he was discharged from the hospital. He thought he became well. I was working at a laundry then. He must have felt bad for not doing anything so he started drinking again and his illness relapsed.

Q: About how long after he came home was that?

A: It was about a year after he came home. He went back to the hospital and died about half a year later. He was ill for altogether 2 years.

Q: What did you do about the hospital bill?

A: It was the County Hospital so we did not have to pay as my husband could not work. In those days there was no welfare service, so I had to work in order to bring up my children. I worked in a laundry in the daytime and did some sewing at night.

Q: About what time did you get up in the morning in those days?

A: I had to get up around 5 0'clock as I started working at 7. I worked till around 5 p.m. and half a day on Saturday. Sunday was my only day-off. On Saturday afternoon I prepared soup or something and visited my husband in the hospital on Sunday after my children came home from the Sunday school.

Q: About what time did you go to bed?

A: I usually went to bed around 10 0'clock. As my husband became ill and we did not have any savings I could not afford to buy new clothes for children for 2 years so I sewed them.

Q: What was the hardest thing for you before your husband passed away?

A: That we did not have money was the hardest. In those days Isseis were around 50 years old and still healthy, so when my husband was hospitalized even the people whom we associated with before looked unconcerned.

Q: Why did they?

A: People were nice to us while we could associate with them, but when they thought my husband might die and I might become poor they did not want to be bothered. A lady who worked at the same restaurant had her baby the same year my youngest son was born so we exchanged gifts. She was married to a Nisei and was well off, but she never visited my husband in the hospital or attended his funeral. Since I have experienced hardships I have come to know the difference of feeling between Christians and those who do not believe in God.

Q: How did you feel when you realized that your husband's end was near?

A: I could not think I was going to be lonely. I just thought how much the children would miss their father when they were growing up and cried, I did not think about myself, but my mind was full about my children. America is a nice place, but since my husband brought me here I don't know how often I felt lonely. I was not too happy. I think my husband drank to relax when he was tired from working hard, but when he drank he changed so much ~~that~~ I was scared. I never knew the happiness of married life. I only lived for the love of my children. I am not the only one. I think there are many Issei women like me. During the first year or so I don't know how many times I had dreams of going back to Japan and telling my mother about my life. When I thought I was really there I found it was a dream. There are only stangers here, and if I talk about my family trouble I might be seduced, so I did not talk to anybody.

Q: What do you mean by 'seduced'?

A: There were many single men in those days. so if they find out that a wife is having a hard time because of her husband they might seduce her. As I am not pretty I did not have to worry but there were many women who were seduced and stepped into wrong paths. I think God had been protecting me even in those days. I could not have brought up the children all by myself.

Q: Do you have two children?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Didn't you get lonesome after your husband died?

A: Yes. My mother wanted me to go home with children, but my sister told me that it is hard to find a job and make a living in Japan with the children so I had better stay here if I could. I decided to stay here because I thought the children would have a hard time in Japan. That is why I tried to forget about Japan for a while and did not even write letters before the war. After the war I wrote letters and sent packages.

Q: Did you have friends before your husband died?

A: Yes, but not close enough to tell everything and be helped.

Side 2

Q: Could you make a living with your earning after your husband became ill?

A: We spent all the savings while he was in the hospital for 2 years so I could not buy anything for children. When he died some insurance money came in. I borrowed money from the laundry for the funeral which only the church members attended.

Q: Did you go back to work at the laundry after that?

A: I went back to work at the laundry within a week after he died. The alteration department of the laundry was busy. They hired another person but she could not catch up with the work so my boss asked me to keep on working. After I worked there for about a year someone asked me if I would like to manage a small hotel. It would be better than a laundry as I can watch the children while I manage it, so I changed to a hotel business.

Q: Did you buy the hotel?

A: I just bought the business and paid the rent. I bought it very cheap as it was at the bottom of the Depression.

Q: Was it in 1933?

A: It was around 1935. I had some insurance money so I bought the business with very little money. A Japanese Christian had two hotels but he could not manage both so he had a Mexican manage the small one. He wanted to sell it so I bought it. It had 18 rooms and we used 3 rooms so I could rent out 15 rooms. This man even taught me how to make beds. At the laundry I made only $30 a month and paid $10 for rent so we lived on $20. Thinking back, I don't know how we managed to live, but food was cheap in those days, so that is why we managed to make a living. I was very happy when a man who won 10 sacks of rice by a raffle gave us a sack of rice. God helped us through those people and gave me health. The rent of the hotel was $50 a month and charged 25¢ to 35¢ a room providing linen. The best room was 50¢ but nobody wanted the room. The customers were Mexicans and Filippinos.

Q: About how much profit did you make a month?

A: The first year we had to buy towels and linen so we barely made a living. From the second year I had money left to buy something for children. Before the war started things got better and I could charge 50¢ for a room.

Q: Was the hotel in downtown?

A: Yes, it was on 3rd Street between K & L. Some old Greek men who sold newspaper on the street corners used to rent the rooms downstairs by month. They were old good men and loved my children, so there wasn't any trouble. Sometimes the Mexicans got drunk and slept on the hallway, so I called the police and they took them away. In those days there were many Japanese hotels and stores around there.

Q: What was fun in these days?

A: When I was managing the hotel children were still small and we were close so we enjoyed life. After the war I worked but I was busy all the time and I could not get in a calm frame of mind. After the children grew up and got married I became lonely. When I was young I did not feel lonely but after I became old and children left I became lonely.

Q: During the 8 years while you were managing the hotel were you ever discriminated by the white people?

A: No, never. People who came to my hotel were mostly past the middle age so they were quiet. I took in only the quiet customers. That was the most encouraging period for me. Children were growing up and the daughter was going to a high school and the son was attending a grammar school. After my daughter graduate from high school and business college she got a job at the State. About half a year after she started working the war broke out.

Q: Was the atmosphere towards Japanese getting bad then?

A: Yes. She was not fired but she had to quit because the feeling towards Japanese was getting bad.

Q: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: I was still managing the hotel.

Q: Were you surprised?

A: Yes, I was. After Pearl Harbor we could not go out after 6 p.m.

Q: What did you think when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: I was worried because my son was still little.

Q: How old was he?

A: He was around 12 years old. He went to high school in camp. In June of the following year we evacuated. About 3 months before the evacuation we were given a notice. In June I sold the hotel but the man who bought the hotel did not pay me the money. I rented 2 rooms in the hotel and stayed there with my children and packed. As the buyer did not pay me the money I went to the WRA office with my daughter, and with her interpreting for me asked for help. About two weeks before we left the buyer finally paid the money so we left.

Q: Was he a white man?

A: He was an European. When we came back from the camp he was still managing the hotel but I did not want to do that again because I had to get up many times during the night as there was no night desk clerk, Even if I had the sign, 'No Vacancy' outside, people who could not read would ring the bell and I had to get up. I had to get up about 3 times during the night

Q: Where did you go first when you evacuated?

A: We went to Wallerga.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: We stayed there for about a month.

Q: Where did you go from there?

A: We went to Tule Lake.

Q: How did you feel when you went to Wallerga?

A: For lunch at noon we had to stand in a line from around 11:30 with tin plates in our hands. It was so hot that I wished I had brought an umbrella. The toilet was like the ones in the country so it was hard. As I was nervous I could not sleep for a month. The barracks had partitions between rooms but the ceiling was open so I could hear the neighbors snore and could not sleep. We slept on canvas cots with mosquito nets which I made. For 3 meals we lined up at the mess hall, The food was not good but we were fed 3 meals and so we could not complain. If it was the other way around I don't know how it would have been. If Japanese were left in the town we might have been persecuted by other nationals. In fact, one Japanese named Mr. Kimura was killed while he was walking down the street. The government put us in such places to protect Japanese.

Q: Did you feel miserable when you entered the asembly center?

A: Yes, I was. I wondered what would become of us and how long we had to stay in such a place. After we moved to Tule Lake we lived in a

more livable place. We were given one big room but had to share the latrine and bathroom with others. Each block had its mess hall. There were 10 barracks in a block and each barrack had 4 families, so 40 families ate at a mess hall. Some people worked as cooks, some worked as waiter and waitresses and others worked as kitchen helpers.

Q: Did you work, too?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What did you do?

A: I worked as a waitress setting tables and pouring tea. My daughter and I worked earning $16 a month each. They gave our son some money. If nobody in the family worked they did not give money to children. People who could arrange flowers taught flower arrangenet, and those who could sew taught sewing. There was an English class by a Nisei who could speak English and Japanese. After I got off of work in the morning I attended English class or sewing class. Some people learned all sorts of things while in the camp, but I did not attend classes continuously. People came from California, Oregon and Washington State to Tule Lake. While we were there we were divided into 2 groups; those who want to go back to Japan and those who wanted to stay in this country. Those who wanted to go back to Japan remained in Tule Lake. We were transfered to Arkansas , and those in Arkansas who wanted to go back to Japan were transfered to Tule Lake.

Q: Did you go to Jerome?

A: We went to Jerome and Rohwer. Jerome closed early, so we went to Rohwer after that. About a year after we went to Tule Lake young people could go out of camp, so my daughter went to Ohio and my son and I want to Arkansas and stayed there for 2 years.

Q: Did people divided into loyal group and disloyal group?

A: Yes. Those who were loyal to Japan belonged to loyal group. There was a fight among the two groups.

Q: Did people say anything to you?

A: Some people who stayed in Tule Lake said that people with Americanized children do not know that Japan was winning the war. I told them that even if America lose the war our children were born here so they will find jobs and can make a living, but if they go to Japan they will have a hard time as they are stranger, so I would not go back to Japan. I am glad we didn't go. Those who went to Japan came back here.

Q: Your son was not of draft age then, wasn't he?

A: No, he wasn't. After we came back here and finished high school he volunteered for a service.

Q: Did you leave Arkansas after the war ended?

A: I left there about a week after the war ended. Before that I could go out but I did not want to go to East, so I waited till the war ended and came back here. I came back here around the end of August in time to enroll my son to school in the fall.

Q: How was it in the camp when the war ended?

A: As I am a Japanese I was kind of disappointed. I did not think Japan would win the war like some people in Tule Lake did as I knew that Japan was losing the war through the shortwave radio news, so I was prepared for the loss.

Q: What was fun in the camp?

A: As we were fenced in, I think Isseis did not really enjoyed anything, but it was not too bad. Especially in Arkansas we had plenty of food. They could catch shrimps there, so we had shrimp tempura all the time.

Side 3

Y: It is not good to have too many Japanese close together. Before the war while I worked at the laundry the customers were the white people. The customers of the hotel were the white people, also. I like that better because they don't bother you. After I came back from the camp I have been doing domestic work in a white family. I like it because I like to work alone. I don't like to work with many people. I think some people enjoyed gossiping in the camp.

Q: Did you take any class in the camp?

A: I learned sewing and English. In Tule Lake I took flower arrangement but I had to quit as I was transfered.

Q: Did you go to Arkansas with Rev. Igarashi?

A: Yes, he was in the next block.

Q: Did he go on the same train with you to Arkansas?

A: Yes. The Christian group went together. We were on one coach, and Rev. Igarashi gave a sermon on Sunday. It was a good trip.

Q: Did you have any unplesant memory of the camp?

A: While I helped the mess hall in Jerome, there were Nisei sisters from Fowler. They were bossy and gave me a hard time. After we moved to Rohwer they went there, too, but they were in another block and were quiet.

Q: Where did you go when you came back to Sacramento?

A: We didn't have a house, so at first we rented 2 rooms and shared the bathroom.. I fetched water from the bathroom and cooked on a gas burner in our room. It was very inconvenient. We stayed there for about 3 months. Later I rented one of 6-unit apartment.

Q: Wasn't there a shortage of houses in those days?

A: Yes, as Japanese came back from camps. People lived in one room or whatever they could find. In the meantime people who had money started buying houses and in about 10 years people were settled down. For the first couple of years we suffered inconveniences, We could not buy refregerator so we bought ice and put it in an ice box. About 4 families shared a laundry room and our turn did not come, so we had to wash on Sunday.

Q: Did Japanese live there?

A: There were some white people, but mostly Japanese.

Q: Didn't you have to go to a hostel?

A: Yes, we did. Rev. Iwai came back first and made rooms in the downstairs of the Baptist Church using blankets as partitions. We stayed there for about two weeks until I found the room.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

A: I did domestic work. I knew downtown Sacramento but I did not know the way around uptown, so I got jobs around J Street. As I was the first Japanese to do domestic work I could get work anywhere I wanted.

Q: About how many houses did you work a day?

A: I worked at only one house a day, mostly 8 hours from about 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Q: About how many houses did you work

A: I worked at different houses every day so I worked at 5 or 6 houses. When I worked only 4 hours in one house I worked at another house for 4 to 5 hours in the same day. In those days the wages was 75¢ an hour. When I started working I didn't know how to do the housework, so the misstress taught me how to do it. When the lady asked me how much I charge I answered I didn't know as it was the first time. She said the cannery pays 75¢ an hous so she will pay me the same. I didn't know how many hours I worked but she gave me $5 and busfare. I was very grateful because my wage was very low before the war. Since then the wages have gone up to 85¢, then to $1 and kept on going up and it is about $3 an hour now.

I hear that in cannery they rush you, but I can work at my own pace doing housework so I like it. Before I started doing domestic work I worked at an almond factory for a while. I worked from 3 p.m. to midnight shift. I had already started doing domestic work then, so I did domestic work half a day and then worked at the almond factory till midnight. By the time I went to bed it was around 1 a.m. and I had to get up by 6 a.m. I worked about 12 hours a day. After I worked like that for about 2 month I caught flu and became weak, so I quit the almond factory. I have been doing domestic work since then so I never worked at a cannery. People who work at cannery for many years get big retirement, but I do not get anything for doing domestic work. However, I think good health cannot be bought with money. People who worked at cannery usually suffer stoke or some kind of ailement.

Q: Did you have any savings when you came back here?

A: I had some money from the sale of the hotel.

Q: That was not a big income, wasn't it?

A: No, that is why when I get jobs I worked about 7 hours everyday, and on Saturday I worked about 6 hours. Sometimes I went to help wash dishes after the parties on Saturday nights.

Q: Did you work at different houses every day?

A: Yes, I did. I worked at each house once a week on a certain day of the week. At some big houses or large families I worked two days a week as I could not finish all the work in one day as there were ironing to do. I also did baby-sitting at night sometimes. I worked as much as I could so that I could get more Social Security.

Lately I am getting weak as I have weak stomach since I had radiation treatment for the cancer of the uterus.

Q: When was that?

A: That was about 25 years ago. I could not work for about half a year. After that I worked as a cook for about 2½ years as domestic work was too hard for me. When I became stronger I could do domestic work. After I became 65 I have been cutting down the days I work as I am gettin weaker. I am thankful I lived this long. From now on I will leave my life to God. Going to church is my only pleasure now. I think I am very fortunate.

Q: Where is your son now?

A: He is working for the State government here.

Q: And your daughter?

A: She is married and is living on Florin Road.

Q: Were there all kinds of people on board the ship when you came here?

A: That was the last year the picture brides could come to America, so there were many picture brides on board the ship. They were talking among themselves that if the husbands were different from the photos they have to run away. There were many troubles.

Q: What kind of troubles were there?

A: Some men sent pictures of them taken when they were young. When brides arrived and saw that their husbands were old men, some women did not want to land. Some women landed at San Francisco and went to an organization that protected women. I heard that some couples

were separated, some women went back to Japan and some stayed here and worked. There were many such stories.

Q: Do you remember any other stories?

A: I heard these stories from other people. That is about all I heard. For five years after that men could go back to Japan and bring back brides, but after that Japanese women could not come here till after the war. Many women who came here around the time I came here are my age. They are over 70 years old. Women who are younger than 70 are the ones husbands went back to Japan and brought them here.

Q: Did you hear any stories of women who experienced hardships after they came here?

A: Most people did not talk about their hardships, but we could tell if that woman was happy or not. I guess about 5 out of 10 women were not happy but they endured the hardships. In those days we considered divorce as a shameful act, so most women of my age held out until their husbands died.

Q: Do you think it was worth putting up?

A: When the children grew up I think it was worth putting up. I heard that some women left their husbands and eloped with other men but they are not leading happy lives. I think I was happier. I had financial difficulties, but I did not give my children bad influence like some people who left their children behind. My spiritual burden was light . Those people might have enjoyed life, but when they thought about the children they left behind I think they were not spiritually happy.

Q: Did you want to run off to Japan?

A: I did not want to run off to Japan, but at one time when my husband got drunk I wanted to kill myself if I did not have the children. I did not think I would become happy if I run away and remarry. At one time I thought about jumping from a bridge with my daughter, but when I thought there might be happiness in my daughter's future I decided to be contended with my life. My children ask me why I put up with my husband so long if we did not get along. I don't want to tell them that I put up with my husband because of my children. In my days people were ashamed of being separated so I could not do that. I tell my children jokingly that if I was prettier I might have done so. I think there are some people who had the same kind of experience as mine.

Q: Was there anybody who committed suicide?

A: No, there wasn't, but I heard that one woman became mentally ill and was put in a mental institute. I don't know if she got well or not.

Q: As there were not enough women in those days, did any man want to marry you?

A: No, not me but one lady who had a daughter married a man who was the boss of a Japanese gambling house in Sacramento. She had one child after another but as they were well off she had a housekeeper and lived in comfort. Her daughter who was the same age as my daughter lived with her father and went to school with my daughter. I felt sorry for her. I hear that they are living in San Francisco now.

Q: Were there many cases like that?

A: I think there were. There was another woman who left her husband as he was a drunkard and married a gambler. She was a beautiful woman but she did not have any children. This gambler married a rich widow who owned a restaurant and sent his former wife back to Japan. I don't know what had become of her. There might have been more stories like that before I came here, but I knew only these two couples in Sacramento.

Q: What kind of a country did you think America was before you came here?

A: I came here thinking it is a nice place with lots of money. Everyone came here with the same idea. When we came to America we were disappointed. I think people now a days are the same way. A man came from Japan to visit his relatives here thinking that they were living in a nice house with a swimming pool and have parties every week. He asked, "Don't you have a swimming pool?", so his relative said, "Our yard is for our dog to play in." After staying there for about ten days this man asked, "Don't you ever have a party?". His relative said, "You must think that all the people in America live like what you see in movies, but it is not so. There is a gap between the rich and the poor as in any country. Not too many Japanese have parties all the time."

Q: Were you disappointed when you came here?

A: Yes, I was. I was not happy the first year or so. I was very sad. After a child is born and started talking to me I forgot about Japan and my miseries.

Q: Did you come here with the intention of going back to Japan in 3 to 5 years?

A: Yes, we did. We did not have intention to settle down here permanently, but as we could barely make a living we could not save money to go back to Japan in 5 or 6 years. I had been working until I got pregnant . Then I had kidney trouble and was hospitalized for two months.. After the baby was born we spent more money and could not save any. Those who had education in Japan and attended schools after they came here could get good jobs, but ordinary people did not have easy lives. Those who came here when they were young with only grammar school education did not go to school after they came here. If they had gone to high schools then I think they could have got good jobs. If they were in the country they could have got jobs like foreman. There were some who went to schools after they came here. I did not ask for a good life, but if my husband did not become ill and lived long, children would not have been lonely and I would have felt secure. I did not wish to live in a nice house and live in luxury but I think if he had lived till now he would have enjoyed seeing his grandchildren. I feel sorry for him because he died when we were badly off.

Side 4

My husband used to clasp his hands in prayer when the pastor came. He did not have time to be baptized but he was saved by God while the pastor visited.

Q: Was it Rev. Igarashi who visited him?

A: No, it was before Rev. Igarashi's time. He came to our church after the war.

Q: Isseis did not have mothers-in-law, didn't they?

A: No, that was the only thing we felt comfortable about. We were fortunate that we did not have to associate with in-laws. I think that is why we could put up with our husbands even if we had complaints. In Japan we have to put us with parents-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, but I didn't have to do that so I was happy.

Q: Do you get along well with your son't wife?

A: Yes, I feel closer to her than my daughter. As my daughter works and is living away from me I don't get to talk to her on the phone only about once a month, but my daughter-in-law understands me well and takes good care of me. My son is very patient. Although he was brought up in difficult times he has not become crooked so I am very happy. My happiest time is since I retired. I think I am lucky to be alive long.

Q: Did you live with your in-laws in Japan?

A: Just for a little while so I did not find out how hard it was.

Q: Wives over here are fortunate in that respect, aren't they?

A: If we have in-laws we have to try to understand them. My daughter-in-law understands Japanese well. She cannot read Japanese but she can understand Japanese better than my son, so I am fortunate. My daughter learned Japanese at a Japanese language school for about 10 years so she understands anything I say. As her husband was brought up here he does not understand Japanese well, so I asked him to talk to me in English.

Q: How many grandchildren do you have?

A: I have 6 grandchildren, 3 in each family. I am very happy now.

Q: Do you have anything you want to teach Sanseis?

A: If they understand Japanese a little I would like to teach them Japanese customs which are not all bad. I would like to tell them such thing as to be kind to others, or not to be selfish. I can teach them the daily greetings or to tell them to study hard at school but I cannot tell them those complicated things. As their parents are born here they do not know such customs, so I have no way of teaching them about Japanese customs. I told my children about their ancestors, but my grandchildren do not understand. My son associates mostly with Japanese but as my daughter's husband associated only with the whites when he grew up and they live in the white neighborhood they live in American style and do not know anything about Japan. Their daughter married a white man, and their son married a white girl. My grandsons on my son's side are are close of their parents and me. After they were married I call them once in a while. At occasions like Christmas we get together but we do not talk much.

Q: Do you wish they married Japanese?

A: Even Japanese, some Sanseis do not understand Japanese, so it is the same.

Q: How about the manners and customs?

A: There is no trouble if I adjust myself to American style. It is not good to push Japanese style. Sanseis are born here and are used to American style, so I do not force them to adopt Japanese style.